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Acq. 21. 1853.

R H A P S O D Y

O N

S A T I R E,

I N A N

E P I S T L E

T O

FRANCIS SLINGSBY, Esq.

—*Cui mens diviniore, atque os
Magna sonaturum, des hominis hujus honorem.*

HOR.

D U B L I N :

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By exchange with W. S. Perry

R H A P S O D Y

ON

S A T I R E,

IN AN

E P I S T L E

TO

FRANCIS SLINGSBY, Esq.

DEAR SIR,

A Friend, whose love of rhyme, and me,
 Exceeds his judgment, in no small degree;
 Wit's chief reward, who fancies fame or pelf,
 And thinks me wittier, than I think myself;
 Has long persisted, but in vain, to teaze
 My deafen'd ears, with documents like these.

A 2

Twice

" Twice nine years silent! Will no Muse inspire?
 " No wants provoke thee, to resume the lyre?
 " Go, raise the *Primier's* merits to the skies:
 " Who sings his praise, and is not sure to rise?
 " Or lash in general, inoffensive satire,
 " The guilty great, if thou'rt too proud to flatter:
 " Courtiers themselves, * like Young, discreetly
 " blame,
 " And rival him, in pension, and in fame."

But, not ambition for a Poet's praise,
 Though even your approbation crown'd my lays:
 Much less of venal bards the grov'ling views,
 From her calm slumber could have wak'd my
 Muse:

To mighty knaves, whom princes favours grace,
 I pay no homage, for I seek no place.

Virtue! whose charms inspire even me to write,
 Thee might I paint, or censure vice, aright,

What

* Where Young must torture his invention
 To flatter knaves, or lose his pension.

SWIFT.

What profelites would the bright portrait draw!
 The guilty world how would the satire awe!
 But I attempt the glorious task in vain,
 Strong is my wish, but impotent my strain.

To rise in song, yet in th' advent'rous flight,
 To steer secure, by reason's faithful light;
 Each just, and nobler, image to suggest,
 With joy, and wonder in the conscious breast,
 To few (through ages to how few!) 'tis known:
 To Heaven's distinguish'd favourites alone.

Nor parts suffice, the true sublime to gain,
 To heights superior far, which still remain,
 'Tis yours, my friend, the Poet to entice;
 Teach him to soar above the baits of vice:
 O! just, as lasting, be his sacred lays,
 Still unprophan'd with mercenary praise:
 Soon dies his praise, when infamous his theme,
 Or lives, at best, to eternise his shame.

But boast we ought, that justly can engage
 The song of praise,—or not provoke to rage?

What

What Muse, alas ! throughout our hapless isle,
If not in satire, can sincerely smile ?

Where upstarts lord it, both in church, and state,
Sage without sense, and without honour great :

Where cits with virtue, and religion sport,
And ape the pride, and luxury of court ;

To court, on birth-days, where some madness
brings

Beggars, that vie in finery with kings :

Where hireling-strangers the chief honours gain,
And native arts, and industry, are vain.

Crimes when no legal ordinance restrains,
And nought but shame of guiltyness remains,
Inspir'd with zeal, in suff'ring virtue's cause,
Satire's the needful supplement of laws ;

Undaunted satire ! that contemns, and braves
Titles in fools, and opulence in knaves,

But who shall censure ? He, who thro' each
line,

With just reproof, humanity can join ;

Who

Who moves reluctant, tho' to vice a foe,
 The frown to low'r, or the blush to glow :
 Ne'er with obscenity his page distains,
 Which hurts the cause, it seemingly maintains,
 (Like some dire pestilence, at once design'd
 The scourge of guilt, and bane of humankind)
 He, who the villain brands, yet ne'er offends
 His blameless family, religion, friends.

Such once were censors ! Men inspir'd to raise,
 From others' infamy, immortal praise.
 How diff'rent those, our connoisseurs now prize—
 The British Momus, Britons idolise.
 Hence he, to ape all personal defects,
 A gainful, mocking, theatre erects ;
 Where even his patrons oft he ridicules,
 (Ungrateful, not unjust) as grinning fools.

The subject's weakness, not the mimic's art,
 Gives such ungenerous strictures all their smart.
 But Curio, prompt these strictures to retort,
 With his own personal defects can sport ;

For thus, while others peevishly complain,
Gayly vindictive, he eludes his pain.

“ The prettiest faces oft, in either sex,

“ Not less their owners, than admirers, vex ;

“ While to no mortal's anguish mine gives birth ;

“ Even its deformity creates some mirth :

“ For say, what coxcomb, scribbler, or coquet

“ Could, without tittering, e're behold it yet ?”

Belov'd of Gods, and Poets are the fair——

Yet not even Angels wicked witlings spare.

Should Cynthia frown, some fop lampoons her
face

In rhyme, that shews his want of wit, and grace :

Or, meaner still, should she a smile put on,

Loud Pœans sings, for conquest never won.

Humour (of satire's diff'rent modes the best,

As impropriety's most striking test)

When true, to just contempt exposes fools ;

When false, it's author only ridicules.

I'll give a sample—tho', perhaps, you'll swear,
That sample proves the latter point most clear.

As Sylvia, and her Strephon, one day met,
(A coxcomb he, and she a proud coquet)
Tho' much incens'd at what he said, and did,
Her fix'd resentment artfully she hid ;
Till, at the summit of his fancy'd bliss,
Triumphant Strephon, ravishing a kiss,
Astonish'd found, instead of yielding charms,
Disdain, and anger low'ring in his arms.

But Sylvia, not contented to rebuke
Her swain's presumption with an angry look,
By less ambiguous proofs confirms her hate,
Her hand performing, what her frowns but threat ;
Loud blows succeed the terrors of her eye,
As, after light'ning, peals of thunder flie.

Yet, what may seem mysterious to the wise,
Thus injur'd Strephon still for Sylvia dies !

Ask you, what sooth'd his rage, his anguish eas'd ?
 Sylvia her arm, with grace unusual, rais'd ;
 Thro' all his nerves diffus'd such thrilling joy,
 As fann'd the fire, she purpos'd to destroy.

* The painter thus, who strove in vain to trace
 The beagle's foam, just panting from the chace,
 His sponge, indignant, flung, the piece to blot,
 When, lo ! Chance finish'd, what his art could
 not ;

Struck out at once, the living foam beguiles,
 And at his baffl'd rage the master smiles.

Blest were the hours ! (their memory shall last,
 Tho' half a century's already past)
 When we, with youthful appetites for praise,
 Together tagg'd such artless rhimes as these.
 Then first, by similar endearments mov'd,
 Our kindred souls each other knew, and lov'd.

Commencing

* Protogenes: See Pliny. Lib. 35. C. 10.

Commencing thus, without one selfish view,
 Stronger than ties of blood, our friendship grew :
 Motives so pure no diffidence could blot,
 The Muse, and virtue fix'd the lasting knot.

Yes we, not led by hopes of pay, or place,
 Aspir'd to emulate the tuneful race ;
 The critic's equal censure prone to bear,
 But not his spleen, unmerited, to fear ;
 Screen'd infant-genius from the threaten'd blast,
 And prais'd even verses, which our own surpass ;
 Ne'er to lewd satire made a vile pretence,
 Which, lashing vice, to virtue gives offence ;
 Ne'er (sweet rememb'rance !) to th' unrighteous
 sway

Of party sacrific'd a single lay.

Party, that jaundic'd friend, discolours all,
 To the great vulgar's eye, as to the small ;
 Suppose at stake even life and fortune lay,
 Or character, more precious still than they,

Pimps, parasites, or jugglers, form'd to please
 Th' unthinking many, win the prize with ease ;
 While those, the wise, and honest few revere,
 Are destin'd to the loss of all that's dear.

Yet search the busy world, alas ! how few,
 Even generous ends, by equal means, pursue !
 Few, but by party's aid, these ends attain,
 Party, of every generous end the bane !

Who fondly murmurs at his humbler state,
 Marks not those ills, which on th' ambitious wait ;
 In long pursuits, their vain, and anxious haste
 To make each hour of slavery the last ;
 In power enjoy'd, and dignity complete,
 Their anguish, even from cares that make them
 great ;

Their peace, thro' life, to conscious guilt a prey,
 Their terrors at the last, approaching day.

Happier the man, who innocent, and poor
 Implores his sustenance, from door to door :

With

With rags, and offals, nature's wants relieves,
 And, grateful, blesses the kind hand that gives ;
 Lives unrepining, and when death is near,
 It's dreadful summons, unappall'd, can hear :
 Sweet hope becalms his agonizing breast,
 And his soul mounts, secure of heavenly rest.

More would the Muse ; but her exalted aim
 Domestic avocations now reclaim ;
 Lo ! Business, pressing to an hasty close,
 (Business, and poetry were ever foes)
 Forbids me even this verse, correct, to send ;
 But I, for verse, to little fame pretend.
 By your example ('tis your modest praise
 At once to merit, and decline, the Bays)
 I learn each poet's beauties to admire,
 Rather than to their envy'd rank aspire ;
 Thus I, by tasting, make these beauties mine,
 Nor, for an author's anxious glory, pine ;
 I read with pleasure, what with toil they write,
 And give them fame, for giving me delight.

Behold

Behold my claim to the poetic art,
 A love of verse, and honesty of heart :
 The rest let Pæbus, when he lists, bestow :
 And grant, 'tis all I need——some genius too.

Dublin, July 20th, 1771.